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AT GOOD OLD NEWTON:

## TWO STORIES OF COLLEGE LIFE

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### THE HILL

Miss Rodman closed an eye and leant forward eagerly. There! — she had it. Under her gaze, at last, lay an incredible coin-shaped microcosm. For more than half an hour it had been an obstinate blob of stagnant water; but now, full of light and shadow, it seethed with life. Turn upon turn of a knob had produced this rewarding transformation. It paid to be persistent. She moistened her lips, which had grown parched during the anxious business of focusing, and a tiny rivulet of exultation bubbled in her throat. Involuntarily she glanced about the room, as if seeking approbation. Students were bent over glittering microscopes on low wide tables; their backs were arched comfortably; they were working with confidence and self-assurance. During her quest she had thought of them as each a walled town with which strangers seek and are denied communication, each hugging to itself its little trove of scientific data. Now she, too, had unearthed treasure; she needn't feel a beggar. It was a great relief to be independent once more, to be certain that you were on an equal footing with your fellows. Doing what they did made you share their pride, even their aloofness perhaps.

A red-lettered placard on the wall adjured the student:

THINK!

How myriad-sided the world was! how thick with stratum upon stratum of life! Millions and millions of gray blobs of earth and liquid awaited merely the twisting of a circular piece of knurled brass and quick as heat-lightning — quicker if you were thoroughly expert with your microscope — they were magicked into worlds. You switched off your electric lamp and they died out of sight; you snapped it on and they were resurrected, whereupon you felt a little like God, creating and obliterating universes at will. And when you introduced the end of a pin into a world the occupants scurried and scuttled madly on either side of it, much as we of this world might do, should God suddenly thrust a great bar across the face of the land. . . .

"Hadn't you better start in on your drawing, Miss Rodman?"

"Yes — oh, yes," she murmured, avoiding Mr. Trentman's scrutiny. The instructor was a thin, youngish man in a too-high stiff collar of the spongeable type topped by ears that were ever so slightly translucent.

"The bell will be ringing soon," he added in an even voice, then moved to an adjacent table with head darting this way and that like an inquisitive turtle's.

Miss Rodman admired and was a little afraid of him. She did not know precisely why. His presence lacked the majesty and repose of Dr. Somnes', who was head of the English department; but Mr. Trentman did know such an abundance of things and he performed tasks with smooth accuracy and an exquisite economy of effort. Every bend, the minutest fillip of his blunt, faintly calloused fingers, counted.

She removed the pencil stuck in her hair, and began to sketch a replica of the scene revealed to her momentarily under the lens. It was slow work, necessitating a routine of glimpses into the microscope, quick mental

assurances that what you had seen was fixed in your mind's eye, followed by meager, hesitant markings of pencil on paper. There were recurrent erasures. Your pencil did not always obey you; now and again it would wander off into lines and contours that would mean nothing to the instructor save that you hadn't been following instructions. "Put on the paper the things you *see*, please — and *only* those things," he had said.

It was five o'clock and the day well into dusk before she had finished. She lingered at Mr. Trentman's desk while he deftly inscribed his initials, indicative of approval, on one corner of the paper. She had made four previous journeys for advice and she felt she must apologize for her slowness.

"Oh, you'll get the hang of working faster as you work into the course," he replied and he added with a half-smile, "We all have to learn some time, you know."

His tone was mild, but there was an unmistakable blur of fatigue in his eyes. She had kept him forty-five minutes beyond the dismissal-hour.

"I really don't like to be bothering you this way," she repeated. She had a dread of appearing importunate and fussy.

"Not at all — not at all, Miss — er — Miss Rodman," he assured her, now busily sorting the papers piled on his desk. "I am always interested in our older students. Their conscientiousness . . . You'll acquire the scientific attitude. What is it, after all, but a matter of adjustment?"

"I know," she said, brushing a strand of hair from across her forehead.

She looked away uncomfortably, and to assuage her uneasiness during the abrupt gap in the conversation, pretended absorption in the fountain pen depending from a ribbon round her neck. She cast about for some question that would show her enthusiasm for zoology. Words were at her tongue's end to explain how the course was

quicken her interest in the "world of living things," but they halted at the barrier of her lips when she noticed that he had of a sudden turned to the blackboard. For a time she watched the brisk up-and-down movements of his arm as he erased one figure after another of Protozoa. With a scarce-audible "Good-night" she went out into the corridor.

At the far end a single tall window was distilling the fading day into a fine powdery azure. Framed in it stood a cast of the Discobolus upon whose shoulders, from the ceiling, a solitary lamp shed a velvety scarf of amber. It blended marvellously with the light entering from the world outside, imparting to the statue a vividness like flesh.

The scene was one of many that moved her more and more as the academic year, her first at Newton University, wore on. Of the buildings Van Hoven Library was perhaps the most magnificent. It was white and high and Grecian, its entablature held aloft by noble caryatids. So imposing was this façade that whenever she entered the structure she found the signs over the bookshelves requesting silence superfluous. And the campus greenery was only slightly less conducive to awe. By day it was a suave verdant pool, and by night a cool nave-like spaciousness under the sky. There was the throb of crickets while in wide circles moths flew about white lamps that, viewed from a distance, seemed a constellation of stars flung across the dark horizon.

It was all so worth-while, she told herself on the street-car journey home.

Gradually the car bumbled down Newton Heights towards a valley whose bottom was striped with the streets comprising Newton proper. She looked back at the University buildings on the summit of the hill; midway in the descent they dipped completely out of sight, rising to view again when you reached the floor of the town. They

commanded the town, received the sun when it rose in the morning and remained illumined until dusk, while the greater part of the day, the valley was submerged in fog and smoke.

She recalled how years before, when she was in her 'teens, Dr. Somnes of the English department had appeared at the convocation in the night high school she was attending and had proclaimed that there was something of medieval splendor in the location of Newton University. It was ideal, he had said then, that in the hollow of the valley men should live lives of material importance, and on the brow of the hill, close to the sky, lives of spiritual significance. He had not implied that there was a schism between the two kinds of existence; rather there was an harmonious relationship wherein each contributed something vital to the other. It was only when a person participated in both that he could be said to be complete.

"You who are employed in the business world by day," Dr. Somnes had concluded, "and studying here at night, in this splendid night high school, you are to be congratulated. You are on the road to cultural realization. Perhaps some of you are dreaming of one day finding yourselves able to launch on a full course of study at the University during the day. To such as you I wish, on the behalf of Newton University, to extend welcome."

It was this speech of Dr. Somnes' that had goaded her into preparing for a college career. Compelled at graduation from grammar school to go to work, she had at first regarded attendance at the night high school as an imposition. The law required it; she must go until she was eighteen. And before Dr. Somnes' advent she had looked forward to release from the compulsion of devoting to the classroom the few precious hours that followed her day in the basement of a department store. It had been a trial to stay awake when one's body and mind were aching for relaxation. But the professor's words, delivered in

his gracious, serenely militant manner, had taken hold of her will and imagination. They tinged her yoke with so much uplifting significance that it ceased to be a yoke. She learned that six years' work would entitle her to matriculate at the University, and determined to see it through resolutely. Six years, she had felt, were not too long a time to spend preparing for the climbing of the hill. She had imagined herself a pilgrim who, bound for a distant shrine, considers the length and arduousness of the journey strengthening to the soul.

But once the years of preparation were over it seemed to her they had passed too swiftly; and she felt abashed by the immediate prospect of entering the shrine. Was she ready? Her work at the night high school had been simple enough, demanding little of her save punctuality. There were grooves and she had followed them conscientiously. Her fellow-students were of her own class: clerks, stenographers, salesmen, — everyday people of the valley who harbored an honest, if mild, enthusiasm for the curriculum, feeling that "education was a good thing" and that it was best to get as much of it as you could "on the side," at the end of your daily routine in the office, where your *real* work was done. She had not considered the office of Cooper & Cooper her *real* place, but she had never found serious fault with it. Her salary was substantial and the environment pleasant enough for the earning of one's livelihood. But at the University, she had persuaded herself, there waited life; life in a sense too keenly felt to be easily explained. It offered "cultural realization"; Dr. Somnes was its embodiment. She had often tried to analyze her attitude towards it, and nonplussed, had fallen back on the conviction that inasmuch as it was a "matter of the spirit" it was impossible of black-on-white definition. Concretely Newton University promised life with a capital L. This verbal image glowed in the back of her brain and together with

the word "spiritual" seemed to make her feelings clearer than minute introspection could.

Three years had gone by before she found sufficient confidence to climb the hill. And then she had made the ascent tremulously and with misgivings, in what seemed to her a rather desperate precipitateness born of an obscure sense of fear — fear of she did not know exactly what.

Now, however, that the first term at the University was nearing its close she felt repaid and vindicated for her plunge. The life was worth-while; it *was*, despite its cost in money painfully saved and despite the constant pressure of justifying it to her friends in the valley and to Aunt Martha, with whom she had gone to live when her mother had died. She saw herself confronted by innumerable screens which it was her privilege to draw aside so as to glimpse miracles beyond. These screens did not, to be sure, part at the touch; it required skill. Soon or late she would develop it. Hadn't Mr. Trentman said that it was merely a "matter of adjustment"? And once she was altogether adjusted, how rich and full her life would be! Why, it had a richness even now, despite the meagreness of her glimpses beyond the screens.

She alighted from the street-car, resolving to tell Aunt Martha what the microscope had revealed to her that afternoon. She mentally framed phrases to express her feeling of the multitudinousness of the world, which was so thick with stratum upon stratum of life. She must bring to the light her responses to the prickings of the spirit. She must so mold and shape them in words as to preserve, even enhance, their glamor. She must learn to write, to create. . . .

In her third year Miss Rodman succeeded in gaining admission into Dr. Somnes' class in literary composition.

"For next time," Dr. Somnes said one day in early October, "you are at liberty to write on any subject you choose. You may submit an essay if you like, a short story, a poem — it doesn't matter which. I should prefer, however, that whatever you write deal with the life around you."

It had been a wonderful hour. Dr. Somnes' voice was full and mellow, his bearded face finely-molded, with eyes wide and glistening under a high, curved brow and a smooth flow of auburn hair flecked with silver strands. Though he was below average height, his voice and carriage made him seem tall, so that no one ever referred to him as "little Dr. Somnes," even though he was actually smaller than other professors who could not escape the diminutive adjective. He did not attempt to force his students into an appreciation of literature and writing by burdening them with assignments, but relied rather on the hypnosis of his presence to gain his objective. His slender hands touched books with an impressive tenderness, and when he read, his delicate lips and white teeth articulated with the ease and flexibility of a singer's. Each word seemed valuable and not to be squandered in a dry matter-of-factness.

English 18 was open to a limited number of students. This year there were but six and Miss Rodman considered herself fortunate to be among them. She had tried to enroll the year before.

"I want to learn to write," she had told Dr. Somnes in his office. "There are so many — so many things here to write about and I really need the training."

He had advised her to wait a year.

"And in the meantime," he had added, "read (with a nod of the head), read as much and as widely as you can. Your cultured person is invariably your widely-read person. Come in tomorrow, Miss Rodman, and I'll give you a list of books, for I need hardly say that indiscriminate reading is almost as harmful as none at all."



He had a way of putting his most casual statements with an overpowering finality.

She had remained in the room for nearly an hour. The sun had streamed in through the window, against which Dr. Somnes' back was turned, and some of the rays had played upon his hair. Others poured blindingly into her eyes and she kept her lids lowered for so long that it seemed at length that she was sitting in shade. It was as if a curtain were separating her from Dr. Somnes and whenever she looked at him it lifted and a heavy effulgence warmed her gaze. It seemed to her that his life-long communion with beautiful things had given him an ineffable grace of presence. Life on the hill had made him a little godlike. She found herself thirsting for his calmness and poise and polish; they held her rapt, and when she spoke it was in a voice dry and muted with reverence, her eyes swimming each time his gazed into them.

She had gone out of the office throbbing. For several weeks afterward she thought of the things he had said — the way he had said them. He had appeared so sympathetic, and yet so — so tactful, a faint blandness tincturing his words. A darting intuition warned her that he had treated her with condescension. She dismissed it, feeling that it was due to hyper-sensitiveness. Her musings ended when something inside her began to insist sharply that she had impressed him as rather dull and ordinary. Some day, she had promised herself, she would wipe out that impression.

Next year . . .

She left the supper-table early. Aunt Martha remonstrated with her.

"You're gonna have a breakdown or somethin' if you don't eat enough, Ruthie."

She hurried upstairs to her room with a hasty reply:

"I have a lot of work, Auntie. I'll have a bite before I go to bed."

"Well, don't you forget to."

Miss Rodman found the room cool. A tenuous but intermittently sharp breeze sucked the window-blind in and out over the sill. She sat down at a small table and opened a tablet of foolscap.

The phrase had been vibrant in her mind most of the day and she wrote it at the top of the page, underscoring the words in a firm hand:

"The Hill

I know a hill where Stillness . . ."

Yes, the capital S was appropriate. . . .

A half-hour later she arose and walked about the room, intoning the first three lines of the poem over and over. Then, going to the window, she raised the blind. The sky was full of stars. The lamps of the campus mingled with them in the distance.

It was past midnight when the poem was completed. She read it aloud twice, and then, finding that the margins were uneven, copied it. Her pen glided in slow, careful strokes, until five white sheets were lined with trim characters, i's sharply dotted, t's neatly crossed. Here and there the ink was damp, and shone, quick with meaning. *Her* words, fashioned by her hands and expressing her thoughts . . . She pored over them for some time; finally she switched off the light, undressed, and got into bed.

She lay with open eyes for many minutes, aware of an infinitude of night-sounds, an omnipresent fabric of music against which the cadences of her poem, reverberating in her mind, glistened with a soft metallic fire. . . .

Tomorrow Dr. Somnes would see the manuscript. Then he would understand that she, too, was sensitive to beauty, and felt stirrings of the spirit. She was not a dun clod over which the rich winds coursing the summit of the hill blew unheeded. . . . Perhaps, later, he would read the poem in that splendid, many-toned voice.

Fifteen minutes remained before the close of the hour. A hush filled the room as Dr. Somnes began to finger the half-dozen or so of manuscripts on his desk. At length he selected one, spread it out with a deliberate pressure of his palm, and pursed his lips thoughtfully.

He cleared his throat.

"I was more than pleased with the themes submitted the other day."

He rested his chin in the cup of his left hand, then glanced towards the window for a moment. The hush deepened.

A student at Miss Rodman's right addressed her in a quick whisper, but she did not hear. She looked down at the floor, where her books lay in a neat pile, and tightened her grip on the fountain-pen in her hand.

"What impressed me in several instances was the sincerity with which the writer had put his thoughts on paper."

Miss Rodman watched him fixedly as he removed his pince-nez and wiped the glass slowly with an immaculate blue-edged handkerchief.

"Yes, the sincerity . . . But — and it is unfortunate — " he smiled faintly, deprecatingly, "sincerity is sometimes not enough — I mean sincerity of purpose. It does not always give incisiveness to writing. Incisiveness is born of a mastery of language; it comes from a sure, thoroughgoing familiarity with one's material and with the aspects of life one is seeking to impress upon the heart and mind of the reader. It comes from a unique and unembarrassed and intensely personal vision of those aspects of life. When a writer gives us such a vision we say that his work is authentic.

"And now," he went on in resonant tones, "out of what does this authenticity of vision spring? It seems to me that it springs out of something very rare, very precious and indispensable — out of an innate substratum of culture. This is unteachable; it is either present in the

aspiring writer or it is not. Without it he is lost and, as I have suggested, no amount of teaching or training will help him.

"I wish you would think about this matter. I wish you would all, before we go further in this course, take stock of yourselves in this regard, and as a — a stimulus, so to speak, I should like to have you consider the following poem. I shall read it and let you come to your own conclusions regarding it."

"'The Hill,' " he began.

He read quickly, now and again glancing at the watch beside him.

Miss Rodman put a hand to her throat, as if to stay its upwelling crimson. Dizzily she arose, and without getting her books, walked out of the room. Dr. Somnes eyed her briefly, then went on reading after the door had closed behind her.

Next morning, at breakfast, she told Aunt Martha of her decision.

"I think they'll take me. I'm going back to the office."

"When?"

She lowered her gaze.

"Next Monday, I expect."

Aunt Martha walked over to her from the kitchen-range.

"Good Lord!" she expostulated, "what's gettin' into you! After almost three years — and, why next year you get that diploma. Look at the money it cost — the way you had to plug, and ev'rything."

"Oh, I've — I've got about as much out of it as anybody could expect me to."

Her aunt gazed at her for a long moment.

"Well, now," she murmured soothingly, putting a large soft arm about her shoulders, "don't you go cryin' about it. You know best what you wanna do with your life."

## BEFORE HE GAVE THEM WHEAT

He grew aware that a new voice was sounding in the room. The round of term-paper readings had caused him to slump into his seat, drowsily indifferent. But now he sat erect and gazed down at the girl reading in front of the dais whereon Dr. Brooks was perched, his torso a neat black formal square above the low table. (Thus seen, the professor's body cried for a gilt frame to complete the impression it gave of formalism and unreality.) To Fred the girl's tones came as though from a great distance, or as though heard through a curtain of gauze, and they lulled and inspirited him strangely.

Fred Baker was seated high on the last tier of seats. Near him three Norfolk-jacketed seniors were shuffling cards at bridge; a fourth, Eddie Gerhardt, all-State basketball guard, was now and again stroking the glistening clipped hair of Peggy Lake in the seat below. Eddie's hands were large, strong, freckled, and red-knuckled. While the one plied Peggy's locks the other paid out pennies lost in a matching-game with Carl Daggett, the cheer-leader. The coins chinked. Fred heard the girl's voice wane. She had turned towards Dr. Brooks, who was questioning her. Fred was unable to catch her answers. Dr. Brooks cupped a hand about one ear and nodded several times. There was, however, nothing in his mien to indicate that she had replied satisfactorily. With a quick intake of breath she was facing the class once more, as the professor said,

"Yes, continue, Miss Hutchins — and a little louder this time, please, so that everyone may hear."

He smiled genially and thrust forward his head on which lay short grizzled hairs in little rows of inverted w's.

Fred eyed Miss Hutchins intently as she read on, her voice somewhat stifled and hoarse from an embarrassment that would not be shaken off. She turned a page,

struggling for breath. It crackled and seemed to split irretrievably the rapport she was seeking to establish between herself and her classmates. Their faces were aligned tier on tier to the ceiling like stone jugs, refracting no light from the afternoon sun sifting through the windows. One beam, intenser than the rest, reached out and touched her shoulder with ochreous fingers.

"To conclude, Mr. Yeats is indeed an authentic poet, and writes with deep insight and feeling. He seems to write because he must. There is a quiet ecstasy in his work and much reverence for things artistic. Thus, in one place he speaks of

'. . . venerable things

God gave to men before He gave them wheat.' "

Her voice momentarily shook itself free from the swathings of timidity.

"Yes," Dr. Brooks murmured.

"There is no denying that Mr. Yeats is a noble poet," she finished, her tone now dwindling rather anticlimactically.

She shuffled the papers together quickly and placed them on his table.

"Thanks, Miss Hutchins," and as she walked to her seat: "All in all a good paper, although Miss Hutchins might have made more of Mr. Yeats' literary antecedents and contemporaries. After all, this is not a first-year course; it is an advanced one, and it is taken for granted that advanced students know good poetry when they see it. The business of this course is not so much appreciation — in the sense of enjoyment — as orientation, the giving to each poet of his proper niche in literary history."

He swung into a glib dissertation on the facts of the Celtic Renaissance, intermittently eying his notes.

Orientation, not appreciation. Fred blew through his teeth, then leant back and adjusted his eyeglasses over

which curved a high forehead giving on to smooth-brushed hair the color of new sand. His eyes were brown and so deepset as to give him an absent, aloof look even when he was vibrantly aware of movements and voices about him.

"The result was that three years later saw the founding of the Abbey Theatre," the professor was announcing.

No pens stirred. The class was impatiently waiting for the promised *résumé* of the work of the past two months. The mid-term examination was scheduled for the next recitation, Friday.

Miss Hutchins was the only student taking notes, Fred saw — this, probably, to regain her composure, to tear herself finally loose from the tentacled fear that had seemed to grip her during the reading. She had moved him, looking so driven and isolated, held captive by that single beam of sun. A soft, child-like face in which her eyes loomed disturbingly large, and shadowed, so that it was hard to tell whether they were blue or black.

He had never noticed her before. As a whole the girls of Newton University had appeared to him to have a nondescript sort of prettiness; they were unrelievedly bobbed-haired, plaid-skirted, wool-sweatered. Buoyant girls who seemed to exist primarily for the good-natured, big-knuckled attentions of the Eddie Gerhardts. Day after day he had stood at the mailbox opposite the Commons and watched them thronging in for "chow". He had never seen Miss Hutchins.

He must strike up an acquaintance with her. Thus far he had not made a single friend in Newton. It was unthinkable to go on living aloof, apart from things, like a toad in a rock; irksome to deny what was called the gregarious instinct. He needed companionship; he was becoming embittered by the disagreeable, savorless aspects of life here, commencing to hate them, perhaps;

and hate, he knew, was a confession of weakness. It undermined your poise and corrupted your sense of humor. It rendered you uncivilized, in the intrinsic sense of the word. Unless some new and soothing force entered his existence he might become one of those pathetic hobbledehoys of certain kinds of fiction, mewling and puking in a mist and haze of magenta dreams. Revolt! To be sure, there were many things here to revolt against; but he didn't care for the customary shibboleths of revolt, nor for the gestures accompanying them. No, he wanted peace and spiritual ease. Going on this way, in severe and defiant isolation, he was afraid he might willy-nilly, for want of friends and because he was young and imaginative, drift into dramatizing the conflict that was day by day growing sharper and sharper. Companionship, open, heart-to-heart talk might serve as katharsis, or at least it might temper his rebelliousness, so that it would never grow into an obsession. He must see things in their true and human proportions, with a sane vision, undistorted by self-pity and pique and hatred. This reclusiveness of his was unhealthy. In the town phrase, he must "snap out of it." He must contrive a meeting with Miss Hutchins.

Yes, he wanted to be fair, but it was impossible not to make comparisons between Newton and Cambridge. Life here was like — like a tight rubber collar, shiny and crass. Crass . . . one of the shibboleth-words but it was insistently exact. The people were really children enclosed by the town hills as if by the sloping sides of a revolving "soup-bowl" in an amusement-park; whirled in it, they imagined themselves having a gay old time, and never admitted dizziness or fatigue. No, it was a good old soup-bowl, yes-sir! It had to be, he saw, for people in whom introspection never went beyond cant labels for things they were either too lazy or too "busy" or too afraid to try to appreciate. And so while the



bowl spun, chaos roared unheeded amid the surrounding deaf complacency. . . .

Cambridge came to mind. Cambridge . . . Perhaps its remoteness was giving it a color it did not properly own, but there things *were* smooth and ordered, full of fineness and grace. Everywhere were velvety adumbrations of tradition, and living resembled an art. None of this glaring, tumbling newness — no headlong restlessness. Leisure for thinking, creating. He remembered teas at dusk and talk low-pitched and thoughtful between shadowed russet walls, — rockers crunching ever so gently on soft grateful carpets; and outside, lawns and trees and hedges, the ivy-hung façades of immemorial houses, all tinged with blue as the sun westered.

It had been his brother Fremont's doing, that exodus from Boston to Newton. Two years after his graduation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Fremont had suddenly come into his position as consulting engineer with the Newton Concrete Construction Company at a salary of five thousand dollars per year. And when his father, old Dr. Baker, had died, even on the day of the funeral and in letters for weeks afterward, Fremont had urged his mother to come and live with him in Newton. She hadn't wanted to, nor had Fred. But finally Fremont's exuberant persuasiveness had won her over. The loss of her husband had unnerved her; Cambridge and Boston were too poignantly reminiscent of the flown sweetness of her married life. Solace seemed possible only under new conditions, in different surroundings. She desired the nearness of Fremont, ebullient and prosperous. Fred had finally allowed adoration of his mother to muffle his protests. But often since then he had upbraided himself for a sentimental coward. He had bowed so easily to the tyranny of his mother's emotional frailty. . . .

"The influence of Lady Gregory can hardly be overestimated. She — "

The bell rang. Dr. Brooks tried to continue but was cut short by the students' precipitate clanking of lowered chair-arms, the scrape of up-gathered books. He succeeded in lifting his voice above the clatter:

"About the mid-term review. I see that I have neglected to give you the *résumé* I spoke about last time. Shall we dispense with it and have the examination as scheduled?"

A groan arose from the students. Dr. Brooks smiled indulgently. "Well, I'll give you the *résumé* next time, and the test on Monday. I hope you will take advantage of the added days of grace." He smiled again, as the class, taking no trouble to conceal its relief, filed out of the room.

Fred lingered, watching Miss Hutchins. She had proceeded to the front of the room at the beckoning of Dr. Brooks and was talking to him. He decided to wait for her in the corridor outside. He would say something about her paper. That promised to be as facile an opening wedge as any.

The prospect of conversation with her was perturbing. He stood in the corridor affecting an interest in the large solemn charter of the college which hung on the wall, its elaborate frame swathed in the folds of an American flag. Nearby was a replica of the Laocoön bearing on its base a placard:

HAVE RESPECT FOR ART

He teetered on his short, thick legs — buttoned his coat. There was a pounding sensation in his wrists. He wished he might smoke. . . .

At last Miss Hutchins emerged. At the moment, his back was turned, and before he was fully aware of her appearance, she had already walked half-way down the hall, with quick, birdlike steps. He propelled himself after her.

"I — how do you do?" he murmured abreast of her, in front of the auditorium.

"Oh . . ."

"I just wanted to say how much I liked your paper, Miss Hutchins."

"Thank you." She was looking steadily at him. "You're Mr. Baker, aren't you?"

"I think so." He tried to laugh. "I — I liked your paper very much."

She was fingering a string of amber beads about her neck.

"Didn't you write that sonnet in last week's *Campus Cat*?"

He nodded. His awkwardness began to leave him and he was able to meet her gaze of frank friendliness.

"Those opening lines were very good," she was saying.

"I saw great clouds with slim-white arms upflung  
And lips soft-pressed against the loving sky. . . ."

They found themselves walking down the steps of MacCracken Hall flanked by two scarred stone lions, and into the weather-beaten greenness of the campus. A half hour later it began to drizzle and they found shelter under a thick elm in the shadow of Van Hoven Library.

He took off his coat and spread it out on the ground for her. This gallantry made them smile. During the ensuing talk their tastes revealed themselves one by one as dovetailing with unexpected sweetness and harmony. There were so many things to say, he found, and yet so few words to say them with. He recalled a statement of Flaubert's he had last week copied into his notebook: "Human speech is a cracked tin kettle on which we hammer out tunes to make bears dance when we long to move the stars."

Students scuttled past them in the rain, stared. Others jolted by in Ford *coupés*. Then came Dr. Brooks, carrying a green baize book-bag and an umbrella.

"He's always talking about the 'business of education'."

"Oh, but he means well," she said.

"No doubt about that. Everybody means well here. It's funny. I mean — oh, I suppose I've read too many books on the nastiness of the Middle West."

Soon the campus darkened, trees becoming blurred indeterminate shapes against the sky. The five-thirty whistle of the Newton Dye Works sounded.

"I must be getting back to the registrar's office," she told him. Early in the conversation she had mentioned her work there after lecture-hours.

"Do you work until late?" he asked.

"Sometimes."

"Till what time tonight?"

"Oh, about seven-thirty."

"Suppose I meet you. We'll go to the — the debate. I believe there's one tonight, isn't there? In MacCracken."

She gave him her hand. "All right, if you like. I'm certainly glad I . . . Mr. Baker. . . ."

Her face was a shadow in the blurring grayness; her eyes shone eagerly. Her fingers were like thin, wavering filaments. He was aware of the moistness of his palm.

Swiftly she ran up the gravel path at the side of MacCracken Hall, a rather meagre, gangling figure.

On the way home he chided himself for having suggested the debate. Still, the only alternative would have been a visit to a movie-palace. He decided that on some pretext or another he must manoeuvre her out of the auditorium. They would go for a long walk under the street-lamps, between rows of St. Louis flats and drug-stores and poolrooms, then into the woods skirting Newton beyond the B. & O. Railway tracks.

By February their names were definitely catalogued among the many campus "cases." Their "going to-

gether" was even lampooned in *Skit-Skats*, the annual vaudeville.

The worn gray curtains in the auditorium had swung up on what was intended to represent a lover's grotto. Then "Red" Durkin, the college comedian, had walked on wearing enormous spectacles, velvet trousers, and an Eton jacket with flowing tie; a large roll of manuscript under one arm.

"T. B. or not T. B.!" sighing lavishly. Then, as Carl Daggett, the cheer-leader and one of the "big men on the campus," appeared from behind a bench: "It is the yeast and Juliet is the bun!"

"Yoo-hoo!" from Daggett, *basso profundo*. He was unbelievably skinny in a long, ill-fitting gingham dress.

"Your hand, your hand, your beautiful, beautiful hand!" Durkin caroled.

"No, no, no, no. I love you too much for that!"

The skit had ended with both lapsing into bovine slumber at opposite ends of the bench.

Now and again the laughing audience had turned and glanced at Fred and Amy, eager to see how they were "taking it."

March was choked with rain and mud. They thought of the streets, full of umbrellas and dripping awnings, as muggy tunnels. They met each night at the Library, for Amy's father had tacitly forbidden Fred the house. Mr. Hutchins felt that his daughter was "carrying things too far," not only with her "young man" but with "education in general." Incessantly he urged her to enroll in Leffingwell's Business Institute. There was a growing demand for trained stenographers. "That Baker boy has no prospects that I can see. Now if you'd get next to his brother — *well!*"

Fred's home was hardly more congenial. He perceived his mother's independence gradually being corroded by the prying intimacies of neighbors. The town was blan-

keted by a thick homogeneity; it was "just one big family," as the *Newton Republican* had said in an editorial.

"Things are certainly picking up. I'm on the go all the time," Fremont said. He had purchased a Ford sedan and talked excitedly of the new Elks' Temple, whose construction he was supervising. Lately he had made a habit of coming to dinner with coat off and shirt-sleeves rolled.

Fred was finding his classes less and less attractive as the months passed, and began to sit through them with a restless tolerance increasingly difficult to maintain. But he must "play the game" in accordance with the code he had set for himself earlier in the year. His long talks with Amy, their many exchanges of confidence, had taken some of the rawness and edge off his irritation. No danger of his lapsing into a churlish and callow defiance so long as he had her. She was soft with a commanding softness; a mixture of meekness and pride that compelled respect. . . . He had long ago over-run his allowance of "cuts." Several professors had threatened him vaguely with expulsion. "A very promising young man, writes good poetry, but entirely too *blasé* for his years," Dr. Brooks told Dr. Fitzmaurice, who presided over English 17, the course in Shakespeare. He had annoyed Fred with his penchant for finikin rag-picking in Shakespeare's language, his questing for "favorite devices" and his pigeonholing of characters. The process was labelled "intelligent appreciation." Only once had Dr. Fitzmaurice essayed reading Shakespeare aloud to the class — *Othello*:

"Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors. . . ."  
in a tinny, old woman's voice.

He discovered an avenue of release from boredom by writing verse instead of taking notes. This he did openly. The faculty understood, or seemed to, for he

was rarely called upon in the course of recitations. Now and then Dr. Brooks did fillip urbane little sarcasms at him, but otherwise he was left virtually undisturbed. Some student — usually Eddie Gerhardt, who was a “great kidder” — might nudge him and ask, quizzically, “Playing tit-tat-toe?”

Then, tingling in the search after a simile or engrossed in the manoeuvring of a phrase, he would return, with a mock-dandiacal glance and smile,

“No, Ed, old dear — crossword puzzling. I’m hunting a three-letter word beginning in ‘a’ and ending in double-‘s’ meaning one who is a nice chap but likes to interrupt.”

“Not bad, Old Socks!” Eddie chuckled. “No hard feelings.”

“Of course not.”

He was at work on a sonnet-sequence in which he was trying to present as vividly and stirringly as possible his love for Amy and his nostalgia for things remote from Newton, things Newton seemingly could not be expected to give him no matter how intensely he might search. In the classrooms he touched up the drafts he made each night in his room at home, while downstairs, usually, his mother, set at bay by pangs of loneliness, entertained neighbors, or Fremont held evening conferences with members of his evergrowing clientele.

In May, Prize Day was to be held, — an annual event, Dr. Brooks had explained, given over to “original student efforts in the field of the arts, with appropriate rewards for excellent contributions in drama, criticism, poetry, sculpture, painting, and music.” He resolved to submit his poems, more as a challenge to what Newton stood for than as an attempt to gain a prize. He was not seeking triumph, he told himself, so much as understanding. Possibly they thought him a morose young ninny. But he had written with passion, not ill-temper. He hoped they would see the difference.

One afternoon he had read from his poems to Amy under the Van Hoven elm.

"I know that love is neither God nor beast,  
But two worn travellers facing towards the East."

She had taken his cheeks between her small soft palms. Her deep, dark eyes shining out of the flowery pallor of her face were blindingly close to his. The lines from Yeats came to mind as she had intoned them that first afternoon with the sunbeam illumining her white throat:

". . . venerable things  
God gave to men before He gave them wheat."

He kissed the lids of her eyes, then her fine rosy lips whose touch was feathery. . . .

MacCracken Auditorium was crowded. Dr. Brooks flitted from window to window, raising the shades. Under one arm he carried a batch of papers. At length he ascended the stage and the buzzing of voices ceased, with a sound like the sudden turning-off of a faucet. Behind him on high-backed chairs sat the Liberal Arts faculty, in linen collars, arms folded. A young English instructor, Findlater Burns, seemed most at ease, his eyes alert for vacant seats. Attendance at convocation was compulsory and he was marking down absences on a large piece of cardboard.

"In the field of verse," Dr. Brooks announced, after a good-humored preamble, "the Committee on Awards was most enthusiastic in its praise of the contributions submitted. In fact, so many poems seemed worthy of distinction that the Committee was rather hard put to it to decide on the winning contributions—so much so, indeed, that a curious situation arose and, I might say, a precedent was set, inasmuch as two particular contributions were found of equal merit in the eyes of the judges. And so it was decided to give two first prizes. These two works express diametrically opposed attitudes towards



the same thing, or practically the same thing. One poet sought to praise it, the other to — to criticize; both did their work well. First prize goes to Mr. Frederic Baker for his fine group of sonnets entitled 'In the Beginning'; and another first prize to Mr. Carl Daggett for his admirable ode 'The Hills of Old Newton,' for which Mr. Rhodes of the Schola Cantorum has written music. Mr. Daggett's ode supplies a long-felt want, a ringing song to be sung at convocations. He will lead us in it at the end of the hour. And now — "

Dr. Brooks stepped forward from behind the speaker's pedestal, his face brightening. In one hand he held a large blue ribbon.

"Mr. Baker? . . ."

Fred arose from his seat in the rear of the hall, his body tumultuous and quivering. Ahead of him the aisle yawned precipitously. Heads were turned towards him, murmurs swelling — then silence as he began the journey towards the stage.

Dr. Brooks was bending over him, his face reddening from the exertion. Mock-heroically he placed the ribbon about Fred's neck.

"Thank you. . . ."

A crackling fanfare of applause. The ribbon suddenly fluttered from his shoulder and onto the floor. He stooped to pick it up, fingers fumbling. Smothered giggles from the students, and, as he finally retrieved the trophy, a renewal of applause. . . .

"Mr. Carl Daggett. . . ." Dr. Brooks was saying, as he found his seat.

Finally, the proceedings over, he walked out into the corridor and waited for Amy. Students, humming Carl's ode, weaved about him, trooping towards the stairs leading to the Commons. He was ill at ease under their side-long glances. He shifted uncomfortably, sorting the close-packed faces for Amy's.

Someone suddenly slapped him on the back, grasped his hand. It was Carl Daggett.

"Even-Stephen, eh, old boy!" Carl chortled and darted off.

A moment later Amy was beside him.

They walked in silence towards the campus, past flaming skull-capped freshmen munching sandwiches on the steps outside MacCracken.

Overhead was a flaring rondure of sun. They descended a flagstoned path that led to a lake flashing among low-hung bushes.

For a time they watched the trim ducks gliding on the surface of the water. The only sound was the soft, elusive plying of webbed feet, punctuated by an occasional *flup!* as a white, smoothly-poised neck pierced the ripples.

"Well, you — " she began, but ceased as he put his hand on hers. His fingers tightened and his head suddenly sank into her lap. He was weeping quietly.

That night Fred borrowed Fremont's car.

"Sure — go ahead," Fremont said. "Have the front tire pumped, though."

An hour later Fred and Amy were alone together inside the sedan, among streets glimmering with mud-puddles under the street-lamps. The sky was low, stretching out over their heads like a straight, flat ceiling, with clouds solidly grayish-pink above the town lights.

"Where shall we go?" he asked.

"Oh — let's just ride." She moved closer to him.

Soon the car was jogging across the B. & O. tracks, finally rolling into a road soft under the wheels. At a bend ten minutes later, the headlights flashed on a sign:

THANK YOU CALL AGAIN

TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT NEWTON

The car plowed on between fenced fields, murky ter-

rains blotched by intermittent barns and silos. A mile ahead they reached a high stone bridge. The car stopped with a brief sigh. Simultaneously they looked back at Newton in the distance. Its lights were glinting feebly, like a handful of phosphorescent beads.

"Looks sort of mythical, doesn't it?" he murmured.

"Almost as if it didn't exist except somewhere in the back of your mind. I mean —"

"I know." He leaned over and kissed her. Her thin arms hung about his neck frightenedly.

As they separated he released the brakes. The car heaved forward, accumulated speed. The air was soon smiting their faces like swinging hands.

It began to drizzle, drops of rain flecking the windshield and tintinnabulating on the body of the machine. A rabbit, startled by the lights, scurried over the road and into the coarse underbrush.

His hands were hard and tense on the wheel. There was no sound from Amy. Then, of a sudden, the wheels whirled with a new, fierce impetus.

"Fred . . ."

He did not answer; his teeth were sunk into his lower lip and he was breathing tensely.

Then she understood, and touching his arm, cried:

"We can't, Fred. We have no money, no —" Her voice died when she perceived that he wasn't listening — would not listen. After a space she turned her gaze from him to the road, which stretched straight as a rod into the stillness. She closed her eyes; she could hear her heart thumping above the noise of the engine. . . .

Suddenly the car careened giddily, rocked, and after a short terrifying slide, stopped dead, as the rear wheels sank with a sucking sound into mud.

Fred leapt out, examined the wheels, then flung his shoulder against the back of the car again and again. Frantic, bruising impacts.

"Up to the hubs," he finally said, exhausted. "No use." . . . He lit a cigarette with shaking fingers and walked about the car aimlessly as the rain poured upon him. Finally he sank down on the step and looked up at her. The small dashboard light showed her face streaked with tears. Her hand came to rest on his bruised shoulder.

"We'll have to walk back," she murmured, after a silence.

"Yes . . ." he sighed, and then, his chest heaving, burst into a paroxysm of laughter.

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#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

TUPPER GREENWALD's home is in Cincinnati, though he has recently been spending some time in New York. He is the author of "Corputt," which *THE MIDLAND* published in October, 1923, and which was reprinted in *The Best Short Stories of 1924*. A volume of Mr. Greenwald's stories will be brought out by a New York publisher in the fall.

## BRIEF REVIEWS

*Jonah*, by ROBERT NATHAN. (Macbride, \$2.) *Jonah* is a gorgeous and delicious piece of work. I hasten to insist that it is not a fantastic or burlesque interpretation of the life of the prophet who is known to most of us solely for his maritime adventures. It is, rather, a careful and sympathetic humanization of the prophet to Nineveh — a rendering in highly concrete terms of an absorbing and meaningful bit of history. It is finely ironic, especially in the incidents of the fox and of Leviathan, and it is very beautifully written.

Robert Nathan abundantly deserves the serious consideration of any thoughtful reader. Of his three books I think *Jonah* is the best. *Autumn* is a poignant and remembered idyllic narrative. *The Puppet Master*, more fantastic and to me less effective, has yet its wisdom. I bespeak for Robert Nathan a place near that of Cabell among our precious minority, the makers of true romance.

J. T. F.

*This Mad Ideal*, by FLOYD DELL. (Knopf, \$2.) I am disappointed in Floyd Dell's latest novel. It seems to me definitely inferior to the books he has published in the past, both in substance and in meaning, if not in workmanship. I believe, however, that it marks merely a temporary — perhaps a conscious — "writing down," after his experience with *Janet March*, rather than a falling off of his powers.

J. T. F.

*Death in Venice*, by THOMAS MANN. (Knopf, \$2.50.) Here is a genuinely important volume of short stories. The work of the German novelist as here represented is highly subjective, carefully wrought, and profoundly moving and effective. This book can hardly fail of making a strong impression on the thoughtful reader. Its record of human experience is vivid, intense, and memorable.

J. T. F.

*Poets of America*, by CLEMENT WOOD. (Putnam, \$3.) The new interest in poetry has produced in the last decade or two a small library of books of criticism, many of which serve also the purposes of anthology. This latest book to be added to the list is a valuable one. I have enjoyed reading it even when I have violently disagreed with it. Having said so much, I must observe that the advertising that has been given it is inaccurate, to say the least. When it is called a "criticism of the whole body of

American poetry from Colonial days up to the present," and "the first complete and comprehensive survey to be made of the poets and the poetical product of the United States," I protest in the name of honest advertising. One sentence is given to Lowell, one sentence to Whittier, one sentence to Holmes. American poetry to the middle of the nineteenth century gets only six pages and a half, except that Poe has a chapter to himself. I am not blaming Mr. Wood for this; he has a right to discuss whom he pleases and it is not he that makes the claims I refer to.

The first chapter seems to me to be a mistake, however. In a dozen pages the author traces the whole length of English poetry, and then American poetry to Whitman, characterizing each poet impressionistically in a phrase. However brilliant the performance, it is scarcely worth doing, besides being frequently misleading. Mr. Wood does not know these English masters as well as he knows the modern American poets. The characterization of Milton as "the eyeless vaunter of Satan's manhood" evidences a popular but superficial understanding of *Paradise Lost*, and the classification of the poets as Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman is a pedantic exercise unworthy our critic.

Mr. Wood does better work, however, with those poets to whom he gives separate chapters. Though he does not possess the strong originality of Mr. John Macy, he succeeds in giving a juster estimate of Whitman, for instance, than Mr. Macy, who sometimes grows a bit hysterical. Mr. Wood weighs and deliberates, and never praises indiscriminately. His chapter on Adah Isaacs Menken needed to be written (though I wonder why he did not mention that picturesque lady's interesting California experience). His chapter on Amerind and "Aframerican" poetry is very interesting. I can heartily approve, among others, his judgments (which are not a little adverse) of Masters and Lindsay; and am willing to allow him his enthusiasms for certain very minor poets. The great omission of the book is that of John G. Neihardt, who is a greater poet, I am sure, than half of those to whom chapters are allotted. The quotation of many illustrative poems is a valuable feature of the book.

Finally, I like Mr. Wood's brilliant diction. F. L. M.

*The Editor and His People: Editorials by William Allen White.* Selected from *The Emporia Gazette* by HELEN OGDEN MAHIN. (Macmillan, \$2.50.) Here is William Allen White, if you want to know him. I, for one, think he is well worth knowing. To know White is to know Kansas, and to know Kansas is to know

the more altruistic spirit of the Middle West. All of which, as I say, is in this book. But Mr. White is much more than a type; he is a very lively and entertaining individual. In him is a little of Mark Twain, and a little of Babbitt, and a little of Billy Sunday, and something of Horace Greeley. And perhaps a dash of "Sockless Jerry" Simpson, who, says Mr. White, always wore socks. (I wish Mr. White had not told us that; one by one our heroes topple.)

William Allen White belongs to the great editorial tradition in America. Today, when our large papers print too many wooden and singularly juiceless editorials, his continue full of life and vigor. His article on Mary White, his daughter who was accidentally killed a few years ago, is great in its simplicity and unaffected pathos. His various pieces of racily expressed advice to the boys and girls of his home town are sound and healthful. Since his famous query "What's the Matter with Kansas?" he has shifted from standpattism to insurgency, but wherever he has stood his editorials have always been pungent and strong. He is, as I have indicated, a somewhat complex figure; perhaps that is one reason he is so interesting.

F. L. M.

*The Bronze Collar*, by JOHN FREDERICK. (Putnam, \$2.) This engaging yarn, by a writer who happens to share my name but about whom I know no more than this book tells, is adequately described by the publisher as follows: "Here is Romance — pure and unadulterated — not naked and unshamed, for it is charmingly costumed, but happily unshamed of its nature: a story that, before the colorful background of the Spanish California of the early nineteenth century, moves swiftly, pleasantly, and lightly to a truly happy ending."

J. T. F.

*Marie Grubbe*, by JENS PETER JACOBSON, translated from the Danish by HANNA ASTRUP LARSEN. (Knopf, \$2.50.) This seems to me very near to the ideal in historical fiction: with a resolute and discerning choice of incidents from the material afforded; with scene, people, events realized in absolutely convincing fashion; with a fine modulation of the writer's art to the exigencies of fact. It is a genuine aesthetic experience of a very high order which the reading of such a novel can give. I hope for more such books, some of them dealing with American backgrounds.

J. T. F.

*O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1924.* Chosen by The Society of Arts and Sciences. (Doubleday, \$2.) The criteria according to which these stories were chosen are revealed rather fully in the introduction by Doctor Blanche Colton Williams, chairman of the committee. They are diverse and sometimes have little to do with the value of the tale itself. One story, by Mr. Wilbur Daniel Steele, was not considered for the prizes because its author had been sufficiently honored by the committee in former years. Another, by Mrs. Josephine Daskam Bacon, was rejected because "it was felt to be another in the long chain of tales that began with 'The Brushwood Boy' and reached the stage last season in 'Outward Bound.'" It is evident also that an analysis of technical excellences played a large part in the judgments. Against the emphasis upon these extraneous considerations I raise my protest. The one criterion should be the effectiveness of the story. If it is successful, that is enough and God's plenty.

The first prize for last year was awarded Inez Haynes Irwin for "The Spring Flight," a historical story in which Shakespeare is the central figure. I think nine readers out of ten will agree that this story is too long. It is too long not because it contains too many words, but because it contains more than a little dead wood. I am glad that Doctor Williams has told us that only two of the seven judges originally placed it first on their lists. "Margaret Blake," by Chester T. Crowell, was given second prize and is a much better story. I am inclined to think that Stephen Vincent Benét's "Uriah's Son" is better yet: it got hold of me more effectually. "The Secret at the Crossroads," by Jefferson Mosley, the *Forum* prize story, is also a good one, though crippled by a poor beginning. Mr. Speares' "A River Combine" is excellent.

On the whole this is a good collection, and nearly all the stories are decidedly worth reading. It seems to me an improvement over its predecessors in the series.

F. L. M.

*The Bitter Country*, by ANITA PETTIBONE. (Doubleday, Page, \$2.) It seems to me regrettable that the maker of this book felt under the necessity of providing the reader with the conventional series of thrills. Apparently she had a fresh sense of the background she employed, and a few vivid impressions of the life there, particularly of Finnish life. It seems that she might have attained real grasp of characters, and depth and validity of experience. But she has chosen to subordinate these to a machined and artificial plot, and her book remains strictly a piece of commercial fiction.

J. T. F.



